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ABSTRACT

Designed as a formal response to the Report of the Task Group on Retention and Transfer (HE 014 825), by Gerald Kissler, which is sharply critical of the community college transfer program, this report examines issues related to the transfer of community college students to the University of California (UC) and the California State Universities and Colleges (CSUC). Following introductory material, issues are raised concerning the transfer of community college students to CSUC, including variations in the CSUC general education requirements and CSUC's policy allowing community colleges to certify the baccalaureate level of their transfer courses. The overall success of the CSUC articulation efforts is then stressed. Next, the basic assertions of the "Kissler Report" are cited and concerns regarding the report are identified in the areas of the adequacy and selection of data, study methodology, and appropriateness of the report's conclusions. Particularly questioned are assertions related to a decline in community college transfers to the UC; a decline in the academic performance of transfers; the relationship of these problems to the increased vocational orientation of the community colleges and to inadequate transfer preparation; the decline in the number of students wanting to attend community colleges; and the negative effects of these trends on transfer programs. Finally, a series of recommendations are presented to improve articulation within California's postsecondary system. (KL)

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THE ACADEMIC SENATE
for California Community Colleges

ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE TRANSFER FUNCTION OF THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A Report Adopted by the
Executive Committee of the Academic Senate
for California Community Colleges

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INTRODUCTION

At its Fall, 1980 Conference, the Statewide Academic Senate devoted a considerable portion of the conference agenda to the Community Colleges' transfer function. Although the Senate has long demonstrated its concern about maintaining the quality and integrity of all our educational programs, recent controversial developments have focused attention on the transfer function and resulted in an emphasis on it at the conference.

The most important of these controversial issues from our perspective are the recent changes in the CSUC system's Title 5 requirements in General Education, reconsideration of the effectiveness of CSUC's Executive Order #167 which permits Community Colleges to certify the baccalaureate level of their transfer courses, and the publication by the University of California of the final Report of the Task Group on Retention and Transfer, more popularly known as the "Kissler Report" after Dr. Gerald Kissler, Associate Director of Planning, Chancellor's Office, UCLA, who chaired the group.

The publication of the Kissler Report, which is sharply critical of the Community Colleges' transfer program, together with the attendant negative publicity generated by it and the summaries of it presented to groups throughout the state by Dr. Kissler, led the senate to amend its conference agenda to permit him to present his findings to the delegates and to respond to their questions. After the presentation, the delegates had serious concerns regarding the validity of some of the data and some of the assumptions contained in the report and therefore asked the Executive Committee to analyze its contents and prepare a formal response.

In responding to this request, members of the Executive Committee as well as other representatives of the Community Colleges have reviewed the

available relevant data on our transfer programs in order to place the assertions of the Kissler Report and the Community Colleges' relationship with the University of California in the broader context of post-secondary education as it affects not only these two segments, but also the California State University College system.

In developing this report on behalf of the Senate, the contributions of many persons from all three public segments of California post-secondary education and K-through-12 spokespersons who provided additional data, interpretation of statistical information, special insights, and editorial comment to assist in the preparation of this report should be acknowledged. In particular, the assistance of the following persons should be recognized: Frank Young of the College of San Mateo and John Mc Farland from Sierra College who first reviewed and critiqued the Kissler material; Tyra Duncan-Hall, President of the Senate, who assisted in the editing of this document, and Nancy Conrath, Coordinator of Institutional Research of the Los Angeles Community College District, who supplied additional data and expert interpretation of it.

CSUC/COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER ISSUES

Although the revision of the certification program in General Education and recommended modifications in the procedures to implement the program have necessitated lengthy and sometimes heated discussions between representatives of the CSUC system and the Community Colleges, Academic Senate representatives to the various intersegmental committees developing the new program feel that on the whole this exercise in cooperative educational program development has been a productive experience.

There are still, however, a number of serious articulation problems associated with this program which need further attention. These include:

1. the variations in the General Education patterns proposed by the nineteen CSUC system campuses to implement the system-wide regulations

2. clarification of some ambiguities in the Title 5 language

3. the satisfactory finalization of the procedures to implement and review the certification process.

Additionally, the Community College faculty is aware that the pressures within the CSUC system to accelerate its recruitment of lower division students may disrupt this relationship. Widespread reports from CSUC system spokespersons, Community College staff, high school personnel, and in published articles indicate over-enrollment and a shortage of instructors in many of their lower division programs. At the same time, the number of CSUC students transferring to the Community Colleges has apparently increased. Systemwide data indicate that 11,150 students with less than a bachelor's degree entered the Community Colleges from the CSUC system in 1979.

Although statewide data are not available for the percentage increase in reverse transfers, the Los Angeles Community College District reports an increase of 34 percent since Fall, 1976.[1] These data suggest the need to carefully reexamine the relationship of the two segments with respect to their advisement and recruitment programs for high school students.

Nevertheless, positive intersegmental faculty relations have increased during the past two years and we look forward to continued cooperative efforts to review and improve the kind and quality of our respective lower division programs.

We consider this partnership particularly significant since approximately two-thirds of all graduates of the CSUC system colleges and universities are transfers from the Community Colleges.[2] Moreover, these students

constitute approximately 84 percent of all Community College transfers to the public four-year institutions.[3] Although there has been a decline in the past five years in the percentage of students transferring to the CSUC system campuses--approximately 10 percent[4]--the success of our transfer students in comparison with CSUC's native student body is worth noting:

1. Compared to the five-year graduation rate of Fall 1973 CSUC first-time freshmen of .296, the three-year graduation rate of Fall 1975 Community College transfer students was .341.[5]

2. Grade-point averages of transferring Community College students in 1978 were also satisfactory with 39 percent earning a GPA of "B" or better, 44 percent between "B" and "C", while 15 percent had less than a "C".[6]

3. Grade-point differentials, i.e., the difference between grade-points earned at the Community Colleges, and those earned at CSUC also reflect the success of Community College transfers, with small negative or positive differentials indicating good performance after transfer.[7] Spring, 1980 CSUC system data shows entering transfer students had an average GPA of 2.90 and earned on the average 2.70 after transfer for a differential of -.20[8] -- less than the difference between a B- and a C+.

Despite the demonstrable success of the CCC/CSUC transfer program for the overwhelming majority of Community College students choosing a transfer program to meet their educational goals, the publicity generated by the circulation of the Kissler report which was based on the CCC/UC transfer relationship--about 16 percent of Community College transfers--has raised serious questions about the quality of our entire transfer program. For this reason, and in the absence of a public response from Community College authorities, the Senate feels that it is essential to bring to your attention its major concerns about the report in some detail.

The basic assertions of the Kissler Report as it pertains to Community Colleges are as follows:

1. Fewer students are transferring from the Community Colleges to the University of California.

2. The academic performance of those who do transfer has been declining.

3. These declines result from the increased vocational orientation of the Community Colleges and the inadequate preparation of Community College students.

4. The number of students who wish to attend a Community College is declining, and the number who wish to go directly to the University is increasing.

5. As a result of the decline in Community College transfers to the upper division, the University has room for more lower division students, and is therefore admitting an increasing number of them.

6. Therefore, if this "downward spiral" continues, the Community Colleges will no longer be able to offer the breadth and quality of program that will prepare students for the University and as fewer UC eligible high school students enter the Community Colleges, the best students are removed from the transfer classes. This lowers the level of competition in the classroom, lowers the level of text that can be used and the amount of material that can be covered, and lowers the norm for grading purposes.[9]

These are serious assertions, and yet a careful examination of the report indicates that they are based on data and contain assumptions that contradict or ignore other readily available information. Below are some, but certainly not an exhaustive list, of the issues that have generated so much concern on the part of the Academic Senate.

1. Supporting data. As a preface to the additional commentary on the report, it must be noted that there is an absence of appropriate UC systemwide data. According to the 1979 CPEC study of transfer students for the period 1973-1978, only Berkeley and Santa Barbara were able to provide usable data. CPEC's computer search for students at the other University campuses produced no record of enrollments beyond the Spring 1975 term, and very incomplete and noncomparable performance data for the terms in which the students were enrolled. CPEC therefore reported that it was unable to

analyze either persistence or performance at the University, and so omitted such analysis for the University while developing it for the CSUC system.[10]

In December, 1978, the University did resume annual reporting of data from California high schools and Community Colleges, and issued reports for 1976-77 and 1977-78 on grade-point averages and grade-point differentials. These data, however, contradicted some of Kissler's principal contentions and were not included in the report.

These difficulties no doubt account for the selective potpourri of data contained in the report but scarcely justify their use.

We also found that the report begins by excluding from the University data base the following categories of students: those in health science programs, students admitted by special action, advanced placement high school students, and foreign students.[11] None of these categories was omitted from the Community College statistics.

2. Kissler: Fewer students are transferring from the Community Colleges to the University of California and the CSUC system

Kissler uses UC systemwide data for seven out of the nine University campuses (Berkeley's data was estimated and included) for 1972 through 1978 for the numbers of transfers with enough units to be classified a Junior to report a decline in Community College transfers of 29.8 percent.[12] Comparable data are not available from other sources nor from the CSUC system. However, CSUC data for all Community College transfers for the same time period indicate a decline of 8.69 percent. While these statistics are not comparable, they do indicate a much greater percentile decline in transfers to

the UC system than to CSUC. Moreover, other data sources do support the contention that there has been a decline in transfers from the peak enrollment years of 1973 and 1975.

It is not clear, however, that this decline marks the beginning of a long-term trend. The reported decline of roughly 2,600 students between 1973 and 1979 from 8,193 students to 5,562--a period of considerable fluctuation in any case--brings the total number enrolling in the University back to a point slightly above the 5,166 students enrolled in 1970. From another perspective the decade of the seventies marked a slight increase, not a decrease in the number of students.[13]

3. Kissler: <u>The academic performance of those who do transfer has been declining</u>.

The report cites the following categories to measure the decline in academic performance: graduation rates, attrition rates, grade-point averages, and grade-point differentials.

A. <u>Comparative graduation rates</u>. The Kissler report begins by reporting authoritatively that 8 out of 10 who start as freshmen at one of the UC campuses will eventually obtain the baccalaureate from some college or university. Later in the report we are told that <u>about</u> 6 out of 10 students who start as freshmen will graduate from one of the UC campuses in 5 years, and that these and the other data are based on assumptions and estimates. In the attached appendices, however, UC data indicate a graduation rate for native students of slightly over 50 percent in 5 years, and less than 40 percent in four years. Considering that these represent graduation rates for the successful top 12.5

percent of high school graduates, it is somewhat mystifying to find that the 70 percent persistence rate reported for Community College transfer students is referred to as a source of concern to the University throughout the report![14]

In comparisons of graduation rates of entering freshmen and Community College transfers, the report states that in contrast to freshmen, graduation rates for transfer students have been declining, particularly for Community College transfers. A careful analysis of the data presented in the report and additional University of California data for the years 1972 through 1978 by Los Angeles Community College District statistician, Nancy Conrath, however, indicates that the decline for transfers and native students is almost identical, with a slightly greater decline for natives than for CC transfers:

Type of Students	1977	1978	% Change
UC Native Freshmen, Graduation Rate in Five Years	53.6	52.4	-2.24
CC Transfers to UC Graduation Rate in Three Years	59.9	58.6	-2.17

[15]

B. Attrition Rates. Kissler contends that "Consistent with declining graduation rates, overall attrition rates for transfer students have increased for all campuses except San Diego..." This statement is supported by data from tables for the years 1972 - 1976 for a majority--but not all--of the UC campuses. However, the same tables also indicate that the overall attrition rate for Community College transfers was less than that of native freshmen for

the same period; that the attrition rates for Community College transfers in good academic standing improved; and that only transfer students in academic difficulty and/or with marginal grades (these are not clearly defined here, but presumably allude to transfer students on probation and/or with entering GPA's of 2.4 to 2.8) compiled an increase in attrition rates.[16] Moreover, when CC students transfer or drop out and return to the University, they lose their identity as CC transfers and are an indistinguishable part of UC data.

C. Transfer "Shock" and Comparative Grade-point Averages (GPA)

Kissler asserts that the "shock" of transferring from the Community Colleges to the University is as great as it is for entering freshmen, but the report does not include data to support this conclusion. Moreover, University released data for Fall 1977 transfers when compared with first time freshmen entering the University does not support the conclusion. Entering freshmen earned a mean University grade-point average of 2.85 (B-) and a grade-point differential of -.77, or less than a grade point. Community College students eligible as freshmen for admission to the University earned upon transfer a mean University grade-point average of 2.88 (B-), with a differential of -.47, or less than half a grade point. The "ineligible as freshmen" transfer group earned a University average of 2.63 (B-), with the same differential of -.47. These data scarcely indicate "shock" at the same level as that for entering freshmen.

In fact, quite the opposite is indicated. As noted earlier when discussing grade-point differentials in the context of CSUC data, small grade-point differentials of less than one-half a grade point are considered an indicator of successful transfer. It is, however, observable that the "ineligible as freshmen" earn a lower GPA at the University than either native freshmen or "eligible" Community College transfers.[17] This is, of course, understandable when one considers the long-term academic success of the "eligible" students with whom the "ineligible" students compete at the upper division level. Moreover, students transferring with a GPA of between 2.4 and 2.8 (about 20 percent of the transfer group) would almost certainly be in academic difficulty upon transfer if they suffered even a very small decline in GPA at entrance.

When considering grade-point differentials for recent years, however, it should be noted that the University adopted the 12 point grading system (adding + and - to letter grades) in Fall, 1976, and that the only available analysis of the effect of the system when compared with standard whole letter grades indicates that the 12 point system lowers GPA's and would therefore increase slightly grade-point differentials between transferring Community College students and native University students. There is no indication that the University is correcting for the difference when computing grade-point differentials.[18] More

importantly, using GPA's as a measurement of success, the 1978 University summary for Community College transfer students shows that 35 percent of the group earned a grade-point average of 3.00 (B) or better, 50 percent earned grades between "B" and "C", while 15 percent had grades of 1.99 or below during their first year. In short, 85 percent who transferred made at least satisfactory academic progress. This includes the 55 percent of the group who were ineligible as freshmen to enter the University, and compares very favorably with the GPA's noted earlier for transfers to the CSUC system.[19]

4. Kissler: The decline in both numbers and academic preparation results from the increased vocational orientation of the Community Colleges and the inadequate preparation of Community College students.

Vocational Education

The Kissler Report's simplistic equation of vocational education in the Community Colleges = decline in the transfer program is based on three factors: First, a negative perception concerning the abilities of students enrolled in vocational programs. Second, a false dichotomy drawn between vocational and transfer programs. Third, the inaccurate assumption that transfer education is equivalent to transfer to the University.

There is simply no evidence anywhere to support the contention that vocational and/or occupational (the terms are used interchangeably) students are inferior in ability to those enrolling in liberal arts programs. Indeed, there is some evidence to indicate that they are more highly motivated and more likely to complete their educational programs than students enrolled in

traditional liberal arts programs.[20]

Moreover, 45.5 percent of all students transferring to the CSUC system in 1975 (and graduating in 1978) were enrolled in transfer majors listed as "vocational" by the United States Office of Education. These include Architecture, Business (including Computer Science), Engineering, Electonics, Family and Consumer Studies, and Health Sciences. All of these are baccalaureate degree programs at CSUC system colleges. Few are at the University. Although 20.7 percent of Community College students graduating from the CSUC system in 1978 majored in Business subjects,[21] only the Berkeley campus of the UC system offers an undergraduate major in Business and this is in Business Administration only. "Transfer" and "vocational" functions of the Community Colleges overlap.

The Quality of Community College Programs

The Kissler report supports the contention that Community Colleges inadequately prepare students for transfer by: 1) citing some information selected from the Lara and Pace "Quality of Effort" studies; 2) by claiming that fewer UC and CSUC eligible high school students are enrolling in Community Colleges and that therefore the quality of the transfer programs is declining; and 3) by asserting that more than 90 percent of Community College courses lack prerequisites.

Results of the survey conducted by Juan Lara (UCLA, 1980) of Community College transfer students to UCLA indicated that courses in the Community Colleges are less likely to require higher level cognitive activities of students than both University lower and upper division courses. The survey which divided them into "persisters" and "drop-outs" asked them to indicate

how frequently they had performed tasks from the "Quality of Student Effort Scales" developed by Professor Pace at UCLA to measure "higher level cognitive activities." The transfer students indicated that they had performed these tasks--writing papers, using the library, taking lecture notes, etc.--more frequently as upper division students than as Community College students. The implication obviously is that Community College transfer programs do not train students to use these cognitive skills as well as the University does. But other statistics from the Lara survey--not reported in the Kissler study--cast considerable doubt on that assumption. These unreported data show that as upper division students, Community College transfer "persisters" scored higher on 32 out of the 40 scales used than did native upper division university students.

Lara's data also showed that the overwhelming majority of Community College transfers to UCLA had much better relations with Community College faculty than with UC faculty; liked very much or were enthusiastic about their Community College experience; and would, if starting over again, attend a Community College. The data taken together certainly present a different perspective than that presented in the Kissler report.[22]

The second contention that there are fewer UC and CSUC eligible students enrolling in the Community Colleges is not verifiable. There are no current data regarding the enrollment of eligible high school graduates in any of the segments. Kissler supports this statement by comparing the 23% of eligible high school students enrolling in Community Colleges in 1975 to an unidentified survey which indicates that only 13% of current high school juniors and seniors intend to enroll in a Community College. These are not comparable data. The only available data on the subject--from a Spring, 1980 survey of Los Angeles District students enrolled in transfer courses--indicates that 23 percent of

those students said they were eligible for the University and 41 percent said they were eligible for CSUC system colleges. Furthermore, if there has been a decline in eligible first-time freshmen entrants to the Community Colleges, it must surely be offset by the approximately 4,600 undergraduate transfers from the University into the Community Colleges, not to mention the 11,150 undergraduate CSUC transfers.

Finally, the assertion that most Community College courses lack prerequisites is simply not valid in a discussion of transfer programs. Transfer courses are articulated with all four-year segments not only on the basis of course content, but also on the basis of course prerequisites. Community College transfer courses have as many prerequisites as do lower division courses at the University.[23]

Conclusion

In summary, the Kissler report in its methodology, selection, and presentation of data exhibits a lack of careful scholarship, a lack of understanding of Community College programs and students, and a self-serving bias which is inappropriate in a document widely publicized as a serious University research study.

In doing so, the report has succeeded in focusing attention on the small number of students who experience serious difficulty upon transfer to the University, and has diverted attention both from the success of the great majority of Community College transfers to the University, and from the much larger and successful CSUC/CCC transfer program.

Moreover, the report also diverts attention from some very serious problems which the University has both in the recruitment of Community College students and in the retention of them as well as of first-time freshmen. It does not consider, for instance, why so many more students choose the CSUC/CCC transfer

program than choose the UC/CCC option. It does not seriously address such issues as: 1) the difference in the attractiveness to our students of its undergraduate majors compared to those of the CSUC system; 2) the absence of a clearly defined articulation pattern similar to the CSUC/CCC certification program; and 3) the reputed impersonality of its larger undergraduate classes and the relative lack of faculty/student contact. Nor does the report consider the probable negative impact that the large reverse flow of students to Community Colleges may have on the willingness of others to transfer to the University.

In short, the problem with the University/Community College relationship is not, as the Kissler report suggests, that the historic ties have been altered, but rather that they have not been. Although the number of students transferring from the Community Colleges since the Master Plan for Higher Education (1960) has increased, the flow of transfer students certainly has not reached the hoped-for level. The relationship involves, as it has historically involved, a very small proportion of Community College students. For this both segments bear responsibility.

On the one hand, the University was charged in both the Master Plan and the Legislature's review of the Master Plan (1973) with selecting "first-time freshmen from among the 12½ percent of high school graduates most capable of benefiting from the instruction offered," and with maintaining a ceiling of 40 percent lower division students. It has done neither. In recent years it has greatly accelerated its recruitment of high school students to the point that its lower division enrollment now constitutes 49 percent of its total enrollment.[24] On its large campuses, its lower division courses are reported to be jammed, and it is currently recruiting Community College faculty and qualified high school teachers to meet the consequent shortage of instructors on its own staff. At the same time, the

amount of time devoted by full-time regular faculty to classroom instruction and related activities is declining.[25] Additionally, reports indicate that almost 60 percent of entering freshmen cannot pass Subject A examinations in English composition, and an increasing number are enrolled in remedial math programs. Coupled with the large reverse flow of students into the Community Colleges, this information does not suggest that all of these students are "those most capable of benefiting from the instruction offered," nor does it suggest that the University is interested in supporting the Master Plan.

On the other hand, the Community Colleges have not in recent years emphasized their transfer programs. Surveys of recruitment literature indicate an emphasis on other functions of the colleges. No efficient method of identifying transfer-oriented or potential, non-declared transfer students has been developed by most of the colleges or on a systemwide basis. And counseling programs---including those for under-represented and/or economically disadvantaged students--do not emphasize the transfer function. Nor should Community Colleges continue to ignore the great disparity between the proportion of full-time students who indicate that they wish to transfer, and the relatively small number who eventually do. Although precise information is lacking due to the absence of adequate data-gathering systems, estimates indicate that close to one-half of full-time students intend to transfer, but that only about twenty-two percent of students who persist for two or more consecutive terms actually do.[26] Clearly, the colleges need to do more to determine the extent to which they have failed to assist students in achieving valid educational goals, and the extent to which students' goals --including transfer--were inappropriate.

We have also noticed that virtually none of the recommendations of the 1973 Legislative Review Committee with respect to providing objective

counseling to high school students, to the coordination of recruitment programs, or to the promotion of interinstitutional cooperation or regional educational planning has been implemented.[27] In the absence of these coordinated programs, we are greatly concerned that unilateral changes in the Master Plan by the University will undermine the entire system of post-secondary education to the detriment of the California public. It is critical that we remember that enrollments in the transfer program by the traditional group of young, recent high school graduates, generate a substantial proportion of the ADA which support many other Community College programs.[28]

Recommendations

In order to improve the current situation, we urge that:

The Community Colleges

1. Develop better procedures to identify transfer-oriented students at entrance.
2. Place greater emphasis on counseling, testing, and remedial programs designed to enhance the ability of students to transfer.
3. Develop better affirmative action and financial aid programs aimed at identifying and assisting traditionally under-represented students in transfer programs.

The Board of Governors and the Chancellor

1. Use their influence to publicly support the transfer function and to ameliorate the present conditions which place it in jeopardy.

The three segments

1. Cooperate in the development of regional advisory programs to better identify and counsel high school students regarding transfer programs and opportunities.

2. Develop better articulation programs which include the faculty and support those already under way.
3. Develop interinstitutional counseling and orientation programs for transfer-bound students.
4. Develop better data collection systems to facilitate the exchange of information concerning areas of both strength and weakness in their respective undergraduate programs.

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